

Remarks

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, entry of the above amendments is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8, 15-18, 43-59, 75-78, 92, 93, 95 and 97-109 have been cancelled without prejudice, either in the present response or in prior amendments. In the present response, claims 173-185 have been added, and claim 60 has been amended. Consequently, claims 9-14, 19-42, 60-74, 79-91, 94, 96, and 110-185 are currently pending and under consideration.

As can be seen in the above amendments, the application is in condition for allowance. In particular, the applicants wish to thank the Examiner for allowing independent claims 9, 11, 13, 19, 20, 41, 88, 171, 172 and their respective dependent claims. Additionally, the applicants wish to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 79, 81-87, 89-91, 93-94 and 96 contained allowable subject matter in item 5. In that regard, the features of dependent claim 93 as well as intermediate dependent claim 92 have been incorporated into independent claim 60, and claims 92 and 93 have been cancelled. Thus, independent claim 60 is in condition for allowance. New dependent claims 173 and 174 have been added to recite the features of claims 79 and 91, respectively. Dependent claims 81, 89, 90, 94 and 96 have been rewritten into independent form as new independent claims 175, 182, 183, 184 and 185, respectively. Consequently, independent claims 60, 175, 182, 183, 184, 185 and their respective dependent claims are in condition for allowance. Again, it should be recognized that, since all the claims are allowable, the application is now in condition for allowance.

The undersigned representative further wishes to thank Examiner Nelson for the assistance provided during the telephone conversation of April 26, 2005. During the conversation, the applicants' representative asked for a clarification regarding the finality of the latest Office Action as well as guidance on how to best submit the foreign references and publications cited in the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) that was received in the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) on

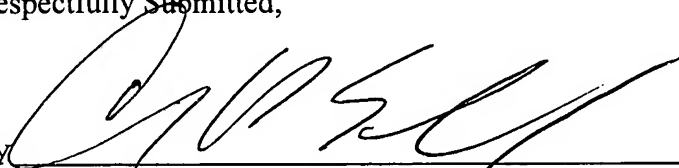
January 21, 2004 (mailed January 15, 2004). As may be recalled, in the applicants' December 27, 2004 Response, a copy of the January 21, 2004 IDS was enclosed along with a copy its date stamped postcard showing that the IDS was received by the USPTO. Since the cited references were already submitted to the USPTO, copies of the cited references were not again enclosed in the December 27, 2004 Response so as to minimize paperwork in the USPTO's file. However, if needed, the Examiner was invited in the Response to contact the applicant's representative by telephone so that the references could be promptly supplied, but the representative never received such a call. In the April 21, 2005 Office Action, the Examiner returned copies of the PTO-1449 (SB/08) forms with the Examiner's initials placed by the U.S. patent references, but not by the foreign patent documents and non-patent publications, because it was indicated that the Examiner did not have copies of these references. To help remedy this situation, copies of the foreign patent documents and non-patent publications that were cited in the January 21, 2004 IDS along with clean copies of the corresponding PTO-1449 (SB/08) forms have been again enclosed with the present Response. It is believed that no additional fees are due, but if required, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees to Deposit Account No. 23-3030, but not to include any payment of issue fees. If the Examiner needs any additional documents or has any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative by telephone so that the issue can be quickly resolved.

It should be understood that the above remarks are not intended to provide an exhaustive basis for patentability or concede the basis for the rejections in the Office Action, but are simply provided to overcome the rejections made in the Office Action in the most expedient fashion.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance and an early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited. If after reviewing this amendment the Examiner feels that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

By



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